

THE SOCIALIST PARTY  
of Gt. Britain

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 80TH ANNUAL DELEGATE MEETING  
HELD AT HEAD OFFICE ON SATURDAY, 13 OCTOBER AND SUNDAY, 14 OCTOBER 1964

<u>Attendances:</u>	<u>No. of Delegates sitting</u>	<u>Branches not represented</u>
Saturday, 13 October 1.45 p.m.	22	Enfield & Haringey, Glasgow Lancaster, Sunderland, Southend (recently wound up)
Saturday, 13 October 4.45 p.m.	27	Sunderland
Sunday, 14 October 12.30 p.m.	21	Kensington, Sunderland, West London

Financial Report:

<u>Collections:</u>	Saturday, 13 October	£ 37.92
	Sunday, 14 October	£ 38.63
<u>Literature and Books sold:</u>		£162.80
<u>Canteen: Balance in hand</u>		£ 14.06

\*\*\*\*\*

This report should be read in conjunction with the EC Report to ADM and the Agenda.

SATURDAY:

Election of Chair: There was one nomination - Com. P. Bennett - and he was elected to the Chair by agreement. It was also decided not to elect a Vice-Chair.

Kensington Branch requested permission for their delegates to sit although their Form 'C' had been submitted late, and a letter from the Branch to the EC was read.

It was agreed that Kensington Branch delegates be allowed to sit.

Appointment of Tellers: It was agreed that Standing Orders act as Tellers.

Order of Business: It was agreed to go through the EC Report and take Items for Discussion under the relevant heading.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATION:

Agenda Item 1(a): Islington - C. Slapper: Responsibility lies with the Parliamentary Committee. Local branch will know best the style and kind of issue which will go down best in the area. Branch spent 3 meetings on text of European Election Manifesto and the EC effectively rejected the text on style. They should concern themselves with the political content and allow flexibility of style.

May (N.W.London): Election manifesto is a piece of Party literature. EC should have the right to deal with style.

Hughes (Guildford): There are deep implications. We should be trusted to act as Socialists and not resort to central committees. Otherwise what are the implications for a Socialist society.

Ahmad (Islington): Big gap between us and the working class: our literature is far from their language. Islington Manifesto was in working class language. In democratic principle every branch and member is entitled to produce literature.

C. Slapper: The principle is whether we can trust each other across the country to put Socialist ideas. The local way of speaking is the way people have to be approached and you have to allow local branches to know how to do this. Clearly wrong for the EC to reject a text agreed by a branch. Branches have not generally responded to the text which was circulated.

Item 1(b) Swansea - H. Moss: Branches do produce leaflets and don't present them to the EC on occasions: branches submit texts to the EC which are debated. The rule is a dead letter. Branches want to be active and produce things quickly: they want to be trusted. Once admitted to the Party this should mean members are trustworthy. Are the EC more equipped to edit leaflets than a branch is? Difference between EC and SSPC which is appointed for their expertise. Example last year of a leaflet issued by a branch containing a mistake and a leaflet produced by a branch and passed by the EC which contained a number of mistakes.

C. Slapper (Islington): Islington in favour of the EC retaining some control and the role of arbiter. They must use this responsibility maturely and resist temptation to hack things to pieces.

A. Atkinson (General Secretary): The EC is elected by the Party - they should not be referred to as "them". EC gets very few leaflets and are pleased to be able to say there's nothing which needs alteration. Recently, 2 leaflets from a Group were excellent. If the EC was composed of members from all branches there would be a fair



representation. EC does not take into consideration where the drafts came from. Certain safeguards are necessary and the EC performs that function.

Young (N.W. London): Branch opposed to both these suggestions which are a demand by local branches for local autonomy and independence of any control. EC does make some mistakes in issuing leaflets but if these are in name of the Party then they will be taken to task by the Party.

D'Arcy (Camden): Would Swansea add 'and sub-committees' to the item to include them in the question? There have been recent leaflets produced by sub-committees which are completely opposed to the Party's case.

L. Cox (EC): Much more autonomy given in recent years to sub-committees and this includes the production of leaflets. It is wrong to say EC demands a uniform text. EC tries to deduce what the membership would prefer on a particular occasion in a particular leaflet. Branches under pressure may miss something. EC is not perfect. If members fearful of undemocratic nature of the control of literature, they can always scrub the rule at Conference.

H. Moss (Swansea): We don't think control of literature should be removed from EC. Branches should be able to produce leaflets without EC vetting. They could be referred to the EC if mistakes found. Branches no more likely to make mistakes than the EC. This should be brought up again at Conference as a rule change.

Item 1(c) N.W. London - May: This is on Agenda because the World Socialist Journal Committee asked the EC's permission to change references in the D of P to 'World Socialist Movement' and 'members of the working class of the world'. We agree these are not fundamental but the EC just agreed to it without any voting. Committee being a bit pretentious - the alterations would not fit the bill relating to the different Parties in the world. The WSP of US has some variations in their D of P. If EC could just agree to an alteration to the D of P they might agree to other alterations as well, despite last Conference deciding that the D of P should remain as it is. Would have been better to turn down the request and have an explanatory footnote.

C. Slapper (Islington): Wording of the agenda item is misleading. D of P has been translated in the only way they could for a journal produced by the World Socialist Movement. Of course the EC hasn't the right to alter the D of P but they did not do so.

D'Arcy (Camden): Branch raised this with the EC as it wasn't clear what was intended. Having seen this in print in the World Socialist Journal we are convinced this is not an issue.

Item 1(d) S.W. London - R. Simpson: There is not much we can really discuss - it depends on members getting involved in the Committees.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Referring to statement in EC Report, we have not really got a Publicity Committee. Premises Committee is virtually one member. London members especially should look at this very seriously: members don't relate to H.O. as they should. A small handful of members doing all the work.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Drew attention to the fact that our members in Ireland have got premises and young members are busy painting them. Quite a lot of our young members are unemployed - they could organise their week to spare some time to H.O. We set up committees but nobody really wants to do the work.

Item 1(e) Swansea - H. Moss: Branch had sent a circular on this. Speakers' test creates two classes in the Party, the importance of knowledge of Marx and economic theories seems to contradict our attitude that Socialism is a simple idea, examinations give labels; the present test will discourage some members from speaking. The ideas of the ad hoc committee on the New Speakers' Test are diluted version of the old one.

May (N.W. London): New Speakers' Test brought in during the war. The Speakers' Test was for those who might become candidates in elections. The questions attached to the ad hoc committee's report are the New Speakers' Test not the Speakers' Test. It is not true that by speaking you will learn to speak. Party has slipped up by not having speakers' classes for years. Passing the Speakers' Test gave me confidence that if I could satisfy several Party members I would be able to deal with most points from an audience.

Young (N.W. London): No other organisation with less discrimination than this one. Speakers' Test panel does not probe into how many books you have read: it tries to encourage. We all make mistakes: I always get off the platform thinking I could have said this or that.

Coleman (Islington): Speakers' test ought to exist but should be revised. We have not seen or considered the Ad Hoc Committee's suggestions. Speaking technique should be considered. Branch ran Speakers' Classes which were useful and has encouraged members to speak more. If you hear a speaker, as May says, who makes him want to walk away - don't walk away - stay and help him. We must have a real test which includes the ability to communicate effectively.

Cook (Birmingham): No examiner is ever going to produce a verdict on ability to speak. Attendance at speakers' classes could be used as a test for a speaker.

Hopwood (S.W. London): We should be talking about education classes: speakers' and writers' classes are run very adequately by LEAs and some members have been attending such classes. We should take advantage of these and concentrate on education classes and theory.

Vanni (Glasgow): We should scotch the idea that there is a bias towards speakers in the



Party. Speakers being like god was in the past. Many members who have never spoken do extremely valuable work. Not true to say if you enjoy speaking, speak. I don't enjoy speaking now. There is no speaker who first spoke after taking the speakers' test - they had all spoken for a considerable time.

Percy-Smith (Bristol Group): Did not intend to take the speakers' test or go on the platform. Because it is called a test, it will not encourage me. Classes are a good idea. If you are no good you won't be asked to speak.

Mountford (Swansea): Speakers' classes/workshop would help people to speak for the first time. People do learn by doing things. Why are speakers never asked to speak despite the test? Easy to walk away but easier not to ask them to speak in the first place. Need for people to communicate ideas and this can only be assessed in the field.

May (N.W. London): Point of information - Special meeting used to be run in Hyde Park where new speakers only were under the supervision of the tutor and spoke for an allotted time.

D'Arcy (Camden): I was first member to take the New Speakers' Test after attending speakers' classes. I could not answer a question on economic theory - then economics classes were started.

Speiss (S.W. London): I never dreamed of going on a platform but the speakers' classes gave me confidence to get up. I'm ready for the next series of lectures on history, etc.

Pinell (Manchester): All the Speakers' classes have been in the south: we need something for those north of Watford.

Moss (Swansea): Good deal of what has been said has been constructive especially re need for speakers' classes and the extension of knowledge. Socialism is about personal responsibility - basic principle of members deciding what they want to do is fundamental.

Item 1(f) Islington - Moran: The H.O. area is one of high unemployment and high crime figures. H.O. is open to the public at least 3 days a week. There are valuable papers and documents there. We should look to our security and if necessary raise some funds to pay for improvements in it. Perhaps a committee could be set up to look into this.

McLaughlin (Bolton): Burglar alarms go off all the time which would mean getting keyholders out for no reason. More concerned about fire risk - this is why we pushed for central heating as the existing heaters were extremely dangerous. We don't want sprinklers because they go off very easily and could destroy the documents we are trying to save.

Hopwood (S.W. London/Library Committee): The material is in danger from some of the members who use it: archives are taken out and left out. No point worrying too much about burglary. We should let members know what the important documents are, and branch suggests an information document be sent round. Perhaps some documents could be copied.

J. Bradley (Enfield & Haringey): Branch tried some years ago to appoint an Archivist to look into the care of Party documents. We need members with some historical knowledge to decide what are the important Party records and arrange for them to be duplicated where practical and placed somewhere else.

J. Percy-Smith (Bristol Group): We shouldn't worry about spending money on security systems and be duped by official crime statistics. Would anyone breaking in be after Party archives?

A. Bradley (S.W. London): re safeguarding actual papers. I could obtain quite a lot of information on the storage of archives through the job I do.

Chesham (EC/Central): 7-8 years ago the front of the premises was subject to a number of attacks on the plate-glass window which led to the bricking-up of most of the front, and the then EC looked at security. It was realised that you could make the premises invulnerable. Locks were changed and since then no attacks or threats to the premises. We have never had an actual break-in. Some internal doors are locked against the 'enemy within'. The SS is microfilmed and other documents could be microfilmed and perhaps kept elsewhere. Tapes Committee now keep duplicates of the Tapes Library other than at H.O.

R. Smith (Islington): The nearer the ground, the safer documents are in case of fire.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Requested that circulars be sent to the EC for courtesy and so that copies could be provided for delegates, etc. When the Insurance Company inspected H.O. they were agreeably surprised at the way the building was safe against break-ins and fire.

Moran (Islington): We are more susceptible to burglary than buildings with alarms. The opportunist thief is not just going to take the photocopier but will often indulge in vandalism.

#### BRANCHES AND MEMBERSHIP:

C. Slapper (Islington): Queried small discrepancy in figures joining and leaving the Party on Master Form 'C', and the General Secretary stated present membership is 608.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): EC recommended copies of designs for a Party Logo be distributed for delegates' and branches' consideration. In reply to a query, there was no committee looking into the Socialist Diary/Calendar idea.

#### CENTRAL ORGANISER'S REPORT:

R. Cook (Birmingham): Branch find the report in its present form very useful.

At this point, some branch delegates said the EC report to ADM had been received late, in one case, last Tuesday.



Item 6 Swansea - Moss: Voting procedure at Conference would be more democratic if it took place after Conference at branches. Voting at Conference is redundant because delegates are already instructed. Practical difficulties would not be greater than now. Cook (Birmingham): Branch not enthusiastic about discussing EC Report or the Agenda: if proposals adopted, branch might never take a decision or a vote.

May (N.W. London): This used to be hobbyhorse of Mid-Herts branch. It would make Conference or DM disembodied. We do sometimes come to a decision based on incorrect information. Procedure would take a long time. Present system with all its faults is best - branches can send circulars but this should be in time for consideration. L. Cox (EC): The old Fulham branch ideas were on same route, but I now think it would be impractical. Delegates' reports to branches would be subjective and would vary from branch to branch.

P. Deutz (E. London): For far-reaching decisions, best thing is for discussion at ADM giving time for circulars and discussion in branches, and if item goes on agenda for Conference it doesn't take anyone by surprise.

Vanni (Glasgow): Very few situations where discussion at Conference would sway delegates' voting. This is not worth throwing our procedure overboard for. If branches cannot wait on a matter they can initiate a Party Poll. Conference would just be a talking shop with status of a delegate meeting.

C. Lovat (Lancaster): Though it would be more democratic, bias of argument would be better than total ignorance, but the time and lack of decision-making at Conference. Circulars help.

Moss (Swansea): Argument seems to be that members are too apathetic to take part. Most of the decisions will have been taken before the Conference but afterwards they can change their decisions. You don't have to wait for the official Conference report.

#### CLSC REPORT:

C. Slapper (Commercial Distribution Agent): Drew attention to his interim report which could be considered with CLSC report.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Referred to quantity of SS ordered and numbers usually remaining and with a bit more effort selling, we could get to the print-run paying for itself.

C. Slapper (Islington): There is a case at times for ordering enough to have some left over so we don't get stuck in the middle of the month without any SS. Current sales average 4 per member. If each member took 10 each, we would double our sales.

#### NPC REPORT:

J. Bradley (Enfield & Haringey): Tolpuddle Martyrs' leaflet did not refer to State Capitalism and could have been written by Labour or Communist Party.

Young (N.W. London): Why was a 2nd Miners' Strike leaflet issued as one or two branches had written saying another one should not be issued.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Because of continuing strike and some criticisms of 1st leaflet. NPC declined to produce another one and EC reproduced an article submitted for the SS.

Moss (NPC): Tolpuddle leaflet produced for Guildford Branch to take to the Tolpuddle demonstration. Committee did not feel it appropriate to refer to State Capitalism. Rest of content of leaflet distinguished it very clearly from other organisations.

May (N.W. London): EC decided to produce another leaflet on criticism of one branch and 3 members. Have seen no defence by EC or NPC of the leaflet.

Coleman (Islington): Those who criticised 1st leaflet received a reply from NPC endorsed by EC.

Moss (NPC): EC had considered and approved a branch leaflet for local distribution: NPC leaflet was an amalgam of articles in the SS by Coms. Buick and Hardy. Committee divided on a revised leaflet.

C. Slapper (Islington/Layout member NPC): Branches should submit more material to NPC: branches should be able to draw up texts and ask NPC to endorse them for topical occasions.

Chesham (EC): By the time the criticisms were received there were hardly any copies of 1st leaflet left. EC endorsed reply from NPC: the 2 branches who did not want a further leaflet did not criticise it.

May (N.W. London): Why did EC accept the criticism of 3 members when they had endorsed the leaflet?

Cook (Birmingham): Re Miners' Strike leaflet - situation was changing all the time. This begged the issue of an updated leaflet - matter should have been dealt with in the SS.

Coleman (Islington): A number of members thought the 1st leaflet ranged from being bloody awful to doing the Party a lot of harm. We should be looking at what should be the Socialist attitude. Then we can talk about leaflets.

Item 3(c) S.W. London - A. Bradley: Branch has received information that in fact the pamphlet on racism is in process of being written and the pamphlet on women in society is being produced and is therefore quite satisfied.

Coleman (Islington): Islington thinks it is good to have pamphlets on such topics, but a pamphlet on position of women in society must stress the class issue and must counter a substantial body of feminist theory which is shallow.

J. Percy-Smith (Bristol Group): I am writing a first draft and doing the job Com.

Coleman suggests in a very strong critique of feminist theory.

Item 3(d) Islington - C. Slapper: D of P does not and cannot say everything - therefore



publish other statements to explain. In favour of D of P in every SS and in every else. This shows lack of confidence in ourselves and sometimes makes writers lazy because the D of P will be on the back anyway: it is a somewhat religious application. There are practical difficulties - leaflets cannot be stencilled because of the length of the D of P.

May (N.W. London): If D of P inhibits the flow of reading it should be in a separate panel. In a leaflet on a particular subject why not put the D of P which gives a much wider amount of information. Which leaflets should it not be on? Far safer to go on as before.

Young (N.W. London): Fallacious to say it takes longer and costs more to include the D of P. We would be sacrificing principle to capitalist economics. Whatever rubbish is published by the EC the publication of the D of P would offset some of the errors.

C. Slapper (Islington): If D of P is in a box that is the first thing people will read. It is of course in old-fashioned language. Good Socialist analysis will incorporate the D of P in the text in relation to the event. Way to get round this is not to be compelled to include D of P in absolutely everything. We should be sensible and practical about it.

#### WORLD SOCIALIST JOURNAL COMMITTEE REPORT:

May (N.W. London): What kind of response and cooperation has there been from the overseas Parties and Groups on the journal, material being submitted, etc? WSP/US have reduced their order from 1,000 to 500 for 2nd issue.

Coleman (WSJ Committee): Journal will have to be edited in this country although there was suggestion in the WSP/US that it be transferred there, but that is not practical. The 1,000 order was optimistic, the 500 is good. Contributions are coming from writers outside Britain. Com. Buick is mainly involved in contacting members outside Britain and has had a very good response. More than half the current issue was by non-SPGB Socialists. We may provide the WS Journal in place of the old WS: Socialist Fulcrum is being published alternately with the WSJ. Contacts outside Britain are very encouraged by the journal and say this is a step in the right direction. Good to demonstrate that we are a world movement. The US Party has agreed to pay for the printing of the 2nd edition. 500 less have been printed of this.

Cook (Birmingham): Queried commercial sales agent approach for the WSJ.

C. Slapper (Comm. Distribution Agent): Has not addressed himself to this but suggested members approach their local shops who might take the SS, suggesting price to shops 35p.

#### SUNDAY:

RESOLUTION - May and Young (N.W. London): "That Item 5(b) and 5(a) be taken first business after lunch."

AMENDMENT - Coleman and C. Slapper (Islington): "Delete Item 5(b)."

Coleman (Islington): Subject of 5(b) adequately dealt with at Conference and should not be given priority.

May (N.W. London): There is considerable amount of new material to put on the immediate abolition of the State and this is possibly more important than the Miners' Strike leaflet.

Young (N.W. London): Serious act of omission if we try to put off a discussion of issue fundamental to the existence of the SP itself. What is at stake is: will we remain a Socialist Party or go off into the byways of anarchism?

Coleman (Islington): More convinced we should not discuss this. If this evidence exists since last Conference why have we not had a circular alerting us to this danger? Lot of rhetorical nonsense being talked about drift to anarchism.

AMENDMENT CARRIED 9-3; SUB-RESOLUTION CARRIED 10-2.

#### SSPC REPORT:

C. Slapper (Layout SSPC): Dissociate myself from remark in the report re production date of SS - in theory if all dates brought forward it should be workable.

Tenner (SSPC): No real problem as long as meeting notices are sent in time except over Christmas/New Year and that is the issue we wanted to raise. Complicated this year by Calverts moving - January issue may be a problem. We failed once since Conference but that was due to technical reason.

Cook (Birmingham): Branch would welcome it continuing as it is.

Goodman (Secretary, SSPC): Every month some branches phone re meeting notices. Branches must do their bit.

C. Slapper (Layout, SSPC): Asked branches to send notices in with other matter and not to him at last moment. Some branches don't inform the SSPC of meetings at all. It helps morale to see what is taking place.

P. Lawrence (EC): Suggested an exception be made in case of January SS - two editions will have to be produced at once - should not ADM make some statement on this?

Tenner (SSPC): Committee could take up the option given by the EC to produce a 16-page issue for January - no guarantee of being able to produce 2 issues in January from the printer's point of view.

C. Slapper (Layout, SSPC): Better to have a January SS with smaller print-run slightly later in month and get the February and subsequent issues out before 1st of month.



Item 3(e) Islington - C. Slapper: The SS is a fine revolutionary journal subject to little complaint. Views of members should be heard much more often to give feedback the SSPC. Any journal can be improved. Covers must appeal to possible readers. Style on the whole satisfactory; new writers should be encouraged; branch favours editorials and letters should be encouraged, with not over-hostile replies. Would like to see the SS writing about the Party: does not favour abstract theoretical articles but those which relate closely to workers' experience. WSJ may encourage the SS to do this with the longer theoretical articles in the WSJ.

Cook (Birmingham): Asked what was best way to get any comments/criticisms to the SSPC.

Tenner (SSPC): Any method so long as we get response.

D'Arcy (Camden): I wrote to the EC about false statements in SS on hypothermia but have never had a reply.

Vanni (Glasgow): SS not always comprehensible, most articles written for the approval of other members. Not simple enough and most far too long. Would like to see it more as a propaganda journal and change the format completely. SS is more an end in itself than a means to an end. Suggested disposal of old SS's regarded as sacrilege. Would like to see the SS looking more like the Socialist Worker - as a newspaper. Stop reviews of obscure expensive books no-one reads - better to review TV programmes which people watch.

Coleman (Islington): Personal view - strongly oppose idea of changing SS format. SS can compete with likes of New Statesman, New Society, etc. - could not compete with the tabloids: Left-wing organisations running tabloids have a lot of money from backers and run at enormous loss. Writing for the SS is like writing a new hymn book which the congregation are going to criticise. SS under scrutiny at Conference and ADM. Dangerous to accept a division between theory and propaganda. Coming out for 80 years: people know what they are going to get. Selling the SS is a political not an economic problem.

McLaughlan (Bolton): We're trying to do too many jobs with one vehicle and you can't do it. This is what this discussion always seems to go around. Need for another vehicle to introduce the Party to workers to replace outdoor meetings where the Party's propaganda was always done. After listening to the meeting people bought the SS. There's nothing yet which replaces outdoor propaganda.

Tenner (SSPC): The reply to Com. D'Arcy is in hand. We have asked members to write TV reviews but they don't write them. Some members of my branch take the view of Com.

McLaughlan and we are producing a tabloid.

Pinell (Manchester): I have sent material to the SSPC which they've had for 12 months and I don't know if it is acceptable.

Moss (Swansea): Short columns recently in SS are good idea and would be good as a regular feature as being of interest to members and non-members. Branches should communicate their news. Covers very important for selling on street and could indicate contents - not subject of one article.

Carr (Guildford): A topical issue cover will sell better.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Tendency to have full names at end of articles - used to be custom to initial articles as being the voice of the Party not individual members. Regards this as somewhat distasteful.

D'Arcy (Camden): Re coloured cover - this unfortunate thing was started back in the 30's with yellow. Now we've gone all through the different colours, comic cuts, etc. Success can only be measured by the circulation of the SS and this has fallen - face the fact. People should buy it for its content. If you've got to get down to their level you are lost. This has added considerably to the work in producing pictures, cartoons, etc. with no advantage to the circulation.

Easton (S.W. London): Colour is important as any psychologist will tell you, though no one colour will solve sales problem, but this should be considered. Contents should be varied, but mainly propagandist, but you can go too far down the short punchy road. It is nice to know there are human beings who are writing the articles as the voice of the Party.

Goodman (Secretary SSPC/EC): The scene has changed - people are less interested; it is harder to put our case across. People are attracted by the visual, more difficult to get them to meetings, etc. To compare sales with the past is unfair. We used initials on articles because members were afraid to use their names - they had jobs to protect. Sign of the times that members don't have to worry so much.

Speiss (S.W. London): What is the SS for - to teach Socialists about the Party or to introduce the ideas to non-members? Back numbers easier to read than the modern SS which is above the heads of the average working class.

C. Slapper (Islington): WSJ not a discussion journal except in sense of being discursive. Members should provide shorter more punchy material if that's what's wanted. Book reviews can be used instead of reading the book itself - or the books can be obtained from public libraries. Several colours and a glossy cover could be used for a little more on the cover-price to produce the revenue, which would probably help getting it taken by shops. D'Arcy says 'you are selling...' - what about 'we' - we have a vastly improved appearance in the SS and selling less in spite of that. In a recession people have less money to spare. D'Arcy indulges in gross distortion - we're not relying on pictures of Mickey Mouse in the SS. Only time we had a cartoon strip was in the period D'Arcy referred to - 10 years ago.

Islington  
ought or priva  
convicted Socialis  
own balance sheet  
Goodman (SU): Would opp  
for his printing service  
J. Bradley (Enfield) rev  
Branch sales? Which  
never have been  
Easton (S.W. L  
shop and  
go and



(b) Islington - R. Smith: Many members think it too risky to open doors to official or private advertising or that the revenue would be too trivial to consider. It might influence editorial activity detrimentally, give ammunition to our opponents. Convinced Socialists we would nip any such thing in the bud. Adverts could help keep the SS down. Would paid advertising be more difficult to explain away than our own balance sheet, audited accounts, etc? It may take years to get this going.

Goodman (EC): Would oppose this. In past Jacob who printed the SS free had an advert for his printing services. Would proposal be for members' businesses, for competitors, for jumble sales? Which committee would decide if a trade union advert is compatible? Only way to increase revenue is by selling more SS.

J. Bradley (Enfield & Haringey): Our job is to propagate Socialism and not other ideas. Branch totally opposed to this as being completely contrary to our principles. Should never have been allowed to appear on the agenda.

Easton (S.W. London): Question of paid advertising entirely different to going to the shop and saying that as a Socialist we are not going to pay for the goods. What are we going to include or exclude? We should shoot this down in flames.

RESOLUTION - D'Arcy (Camden) and J. Bradley (Enfield & Haringey): "Next business."

CARRIED OVERWHELMINGLY.

SS SUBSCRIBERS' COMMITTEE REPORT:

L. Cox (EC): Drew attention to Committee's call for help in wrapping and dispatching the SS each month.

TAPES COMMITTEE:

J. Bradley (Enfield & Haringey): Asked whether any letter or covering document was sent out stating the Party's case in general when tapes are sent to enquirers.

C. Slapper (Tapes Committee): Did not think Party literature is sent with tapes but it seems a sensible idea.

MASTER FORM 'C':

C. Slapper (Islington): Glasgow figures should show members ceased '2' and membership at 30.6.84 should read '59'. Some figures of branch membership did not tally from end of 1983 to this Master Form 'C'.

McLaughlan (Bolton): Assumed Camden figure should read 108 visitors, not members but asked how this was included as it makes a nonsense of all the other figures for visitors. Footnote states it includes Tower Hill and Hyde Park.

Coleman (Islington): Nonsense for Camden to claim Hyde park meetings: Islington could claim the same - and N.W. London. Propaganda Committee organises meetings in Hyde Park.

D'Arcy (Camden): Nothing to do with the fact that the branch is holding meetings in Hyde Park.

May (N.W. London): Propaganda Committee does not run them - they did when they had a speakers' list with speakers speaking at certain times and certain branches in control with literature and platform. For past 5 years N.W. London have run meetings from 11 - 1.30. What happens in afternoon is up to Islington branch. Islington take platform away. Committee should make all arrangements.

RESOLUTION - Coleman and C. Slapper (Islington): "That in future branches submitting information for the Master Form 'C' shall not claim to be running meetings which are being run by the Party centrally."

C. Slapper (Islington): Running of Hyde Park has limited scope with half the Party living outside London. No formal complaints have been made re Propaganda Committee re Hyde Park. I have spoken during the hours May mentioned unaware that meeting was being run by specific branch.

D'Arcy (Camden): If Committee were running meetings it would be wrong for a branch to claim they were running them. If I had to depend on speaking invitations from the Committee I would not be speaking for the Party.

Hopwood (S.W. London): These figures were queried. Branches do not complete the Form 'C' properly.

Moss (Swansea): A matter of parochial interest.

Goodman (Islington): If resolution not carried, any branch can go to a speaking area and say it is being run by them.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 12 - 0

C. Slapper (Islington): Queried why outstanding accounts have been omitted from Master Form 'C'.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Would ensure a column added in future for this.

Item 4(a) Kensington - Goodman: Attitude of branches in collection of dues extremely lackadaisical. About half the membership are not paying dues - not dues waived but dues not collected. Some branches say they are too busy making propaganda. If we had to pay H.O. irrespective of whether dues were collected, this might make some branches make more effort. For responsible Socialists, branch thinks it a disgrace that only half pay dues.

H. Cottis (Central): This is since abolition of dues stamps. No feeling of a commitment - people forget dues - treasurers don't press and members get behind.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Asked delegates to consider returning the entire dues owing to H.O. instead of 80%. Branches ask for grants where necessary and it would make life easier for everyone.



P. Deutz (E. London): Branch ran series of meetings without asking for a grant and branch at 30.6.84 had a deficit so we would not have been able to return full dues. Moss (Swansea): It would mean those who pay dues shelling out more if this adopted. Branches might have to ask for a grant to pay their dues.

Cook (Birmingham): It would assist if there was a pro-forma for branch treasurer for the collection and recording of dues.

Mountford (Swansea): Where dues are not being collected, perhaps branches are ailing and going through a patch of inactivity. The obligation to pay dues could be a stimulus to winding up branches.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Branch seems to have waived the most. Branch has 6 over 65 and 4 unemployed which has inflated amount waived.

Cook (Birmingham): Queried over 65's being included in dues waived as they are under no obligation to pay.

L. Cox (EC): £4,800 should come in from dues but we're actually getting £1,268.

Easton (S.W. London): It is individual members who are responsible for paying.

Suggestion would be divisive as some would subsidise others. Dues stamps would be one way of getting the money in.

Goodman (Kensington): One of the branch treasurer's jobs is to collect dues. It is not ailing branches. Dues stamps abolished to save work.

Item 4(b) Islington - Grant: Involvement in the Party should not have some fixed monetary tag. An annual review of the books and members having to renew their commitment would mean we would not have to terminate membership. Failure to keep the commitment would be sounder grounds to say membership should be terminated. Present situation not successful. Proposal would be better measure of members' commitment and better basis for knowing what income would be raised.

Shannon (Lancaster): A lot who don't pay may do so mainly because of there being a set due - not a personal decision but a rule in Party's constitution. System suggested more in spirit of Socialism.

H. Walters (Islington): Dues are a commitment on each member: this idea would be much the same. Existing arrangement is no problem - dues can be waived. Suggestion more divisive. You could have a contribution section at back of Rule book with Treasurer signing it.

McLellan (Manchester): In favour of looking at this. Amounts would vary quite a lot. Scope for more income with a standing order type thing.

Tenner (Kensington): Arguments evading what is behind this. Most members don't take their membership as seriously as they should. They could make regular donations now. They are not even prepared to pay the minimum.

H. Cottis (Central): You can already do this. We are used to being committed to certain sums in capitalist society. Some of us want to get away with not paying even though we can afford it.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Dues are very low - can't believe so many can't afford to pay. There is provision to pay more under Fund Raising Account.

P. Lawrence (EC): Moved to speak out of total boredom. Been listening to such discussions for 35 years. It never makes the slightest difference to what happens. Just live with it. If we get into desperate straits we will deal with it as it arises.

Chesham (EC): Items on Agenda and must be discussed. I can't accept that any member can't pay 25p per week.

P. Wilson (Treasurer): We don't admit to membership those who do not satisfy us of their acceptance of the Party's case: perhaps we should establish that they understand what is a due. Adequate provision for waiving dues. More work to adopt Islington arrangement.

A. More (Islington): Don't like attitude that everyone can afford 25p a week. They obviously don't know what poverty is.

Grant (Islington): 25p doesn't seem much but that's not how it works. Members spend money getting to branches, may have pint of beer, or eat out first. Dues accumulate. If present method notably successful, proposal would not have been made. Perhaps this could be considered for next Conference.

#### PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT:

L. Cox (EC): Committee comment on poor response to contesting next election. It would help EC and Committee to know branches' views.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Branch circulated other London branches re help if branch decided to contest, but haven't had replies.

C. Slapper (Islington): Branch determined to contest when it arises. Lot of gains from activity this summer. Must have far more support from other branches and some kind of assurance of at least one other seat being contested which we can link up with over the production of a manifesto. Immediate impact of an election not always apparent.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): Branches intending to contest next election should now be actively engaged - not leaving it until last few months.

Coleman (Islington): Branch aware of this. Have covered constituency with posters and doing work locally. Not only London members we would need to call on but from outside London too. We would make the effort to provide accommodation.

#### PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE REPORT:

May (N.W. London): Asked Committee to answer question re running of Hyde Park meetings.

(Propaganda Committee) There are not what they are. H. Walters (Islington) restarted by members. PREMISES - Mr. H. Walters (Islington) restarted by members.



Propaganda Committee: Committee responsible for having a platform and literature there for most weeks in the year and there are sufficient speakers.  
Coleman (Propaganda Committee): It is not done as in the old days but outdoor meetings are not what they were in the old days. We don't draw up lists. We rely on members cooperatively to turn up and get on with it. We know certain members do it Sunday morning and we leave them to do it. It all works well, one speaker getting up after another.

H. Walters (Islington): Party ceased having meetings in Hyde Park for a time but restarted by members bringing platforms and speaking and others joined in.

RESOLUTION - Moss (Swansea) and Hopwood (S.W. London): "Next business".

CARRIED 12-0

PREMISES COMMITTEE:

H. Walters (Premises Committee): Has had some help in redecorating of H.O. which is still under way. Suggested Committee be enlarged to as many members as possible, say 12.

C. Slapper (Islington): Asked why we hadn't had a shop window and wire grille.

H. Walters: Inside of HO must be attractive to members but outside unobtrusive in an area of potential hooliganism. New plate-glass window is to be installed.

RESOLUTION - Cook (Birmingham) and Moss (Swansea): "That the EC's Report to ADM be adopted." AGREED.

Moss (Swansea): Asked delegates to consider taking Item 2(a) after Item 5(a), as it has been on the last two Conference Agendas and only discussed briefly at the end.

RESOLUTION - Moss (Swansea) and Deutz (E. London): "That Item 2(a) be taken after Item 5(a)."

D'Arcy (Camden): It is not an important subject but there is an item on the subject of the abolition of the state which is an important matter of principle not of the future. The whole Agenda is from Islington - there is one item from N.W. London which should be taken.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 5-3.

The draw for the Raffle of Bound Volumes of the SS donated by the late Com. Frank Offord was now made, the winning ticket being No.31 in the name of Martin Cook (Guildford). Approx. £130 had been raised.

Item 5(a) Islington - Coleman: Circular from Camden Branch headed "SPGB, the Trade Unions and the Miners' Strike" suggests that the Party's position was thrashed out in 1905, that the Party must oppose any action tending to sidetrack the workers from the only path to its emancipation - this path being that to Socialism. This not Party's attitude: in 1906 Party arrived at position not opposing trade union action simply because trade unionists were not Socialists. Party's view is as published in 1937 SS. In any fight by wage labour against capital we have to be on the side of workers but critical about the kind of sympathy we can give. All of the articles in the SS and leaflets (on Miners' Strike) have been critical. Islington Branch had serious doubts about the style of the 1st leaflet - it seemed to be advising miners how to conduct their strike. Question of miners ballot should be dealt with within the union. We oppose anti-Socialist ideas not anti-Socialists simply because they are anti-Socialists. It is they we depend on to put our revolutionary ideas into practice. Whenever workers engage in trade union struggle we have to be there. The redundancy payment to NUM has been doubled since the strike began. It is not for us to advise them. Enormous task of communicating our message clearly and convincingly.

Young (N.W. London): Branch members perturbed about EC's and others' activities over miners' strike. Party has clearly floundered about issuing one leaflet after another. EC did not agree with the Islington leaflet but the branch could issue it. We have always said TU action could only be supported by the Party if it was on sound lines. Support can never amount to any more than a political statement. Sound lines means workers should only strike when it is propitious in boom times not when there are 50 million tons of coal. I recommend to you the Camden statement which is completely satisfactory. There is a need for ballots so workers come out together and go back together. Major issue is effort of NUM to prevent closure of uneconomic pits. This ignores reality of capitalism. How does preventing import of coal preserve jobs for miners of the world? Party has obligation to explain capitalism to workers. Everything has been done wrong and miners are on a hiding to nothing. It will not succeed. What was the haste in which Islington and the NPC rushed in to fish in troubled waters? It was in order to jump on the left-wing band wagon to make political capital out of the strike. Study the Camden document, and consider carefully whether you take on the job of advising miners.

J. Percy-Smith (Bristol Group): Strike is 7 months old and we are only now discussing what the Party's attitude must be. Not one word from Young about what the NCB are doing or the government, police or courts. Issue of ballot used as a classic maxim of divide and rule. All waiting for capitalism to blow itself up. It will not happen like that.

Vanni (Glasgow): Couldn't see much wrong with leaflet at first but after seeing the criticisms saw it in a different way. Gross overreaction to call it a scabs' charter. All working miners condemned without exception. Some working miners may have considered working in best interest of NUM. Suggestion that it was a political strike - NUM members do not just agree on getting rid of Thatcher: some of them think miners will not win. Being on strike is not necessarily same as supporting a strike. Only one way to find out



the strength and that is by ballot.

D'Arcy (Camden): When it was obvious that a number of miners were not on strike it should have been looked at before the Party moved in. People can't support a strike when their own members don't support it. We should be critical and if possible give them advice. Camden objected to statement in "Can the Strike Succeed?". Last big miners strike in 1926 had massive support but they went back for less wages and the loss of 100,000 jobs. 1972 and 1974 strikes were in boom years. 1984, 3.2 million unemployed. Seems to be a failure of the writers to look at the economic circumstances prevailing. Object of any strike must be to make people better off. Miners cannot get back the money they have lost. Second leaflet debates import of foreign coal. The strike is not in interest of working class as a whole. Recent dockers strike against other members of working class. Party has been opposed to strikes like that. We don't support the view of the right to work. This leaflet implies that we support the miners strike to keep open uneconomic pits - arguing the right to work which is the Labour Party's case. If you support the miners you support the utopian idea.

C. Slapper (Islington): D'Arcy has raised the phantom of reformism. Some members confusing 'on the side of' with 'approve of the actions of'. It is the basis of the entire Party's existence - to further the material interests of the working class to which we belong. Two aspects of Party's theory we are in danger of losing - one is the class struggle and the other is the theory of the state. Class struggle is not fair or objective: you can't be objective about this. The state is not objective - it defends the interests of the capitalist minority. Party's role should be to expose the function of the police employed to do the capitalist class's dirty work.

McCord (Guildford): Miners strike in 1972 ended because of price of oil. Miners don't enter a strike purely for financial gain: they are prepared to accept loss of money, so don't knock that.

Moss (NPC): Item relates to leaflet produced by NPC. 95% at least of that material came from April SS articles by Comrades Buick and Hardy. No complaints whatever were received about these articles. NPC agreed certain improvements might have been made on basis of criticisms made. We did not just echo media statements.

P. Lawrence (EC): Constitution of NUM is democratic and if majority of its members insisted on a ballot it could have been secured. 120,000 miners have been on strike for 8 months and that is not an easy thing to get unless they are enthusiastic about it. Obvious to every miner that it's better to strike when no reserve stocks. Strike about other and more important things. Party hasn't expressed its case to full extent - this is the pressure of human needs of workers on the economic dictates of capital and the constrictions of capitalism. Miners against their communities being at mercy of economic forces where no democratic decisions are taken, etc. We have a lot to say on this. Miners have only succeeded in sustaining the effort by voluntary cooperation, collections, communal meals, etc., and that is what Socialism is all about too - voluntary cooperation and organisation. Why are we not saying this in our literature?

Chesham (EC): One of the central issues is democracy and concept of leadership. I support first leaflet issued by NPC. Want to look at conduct of strike and Party's attitude to strikes over period of time: series of articles by Jacomb in 1911, pamphlet on Trade Unions, 1979 SS on limitation of trade unions.

May (N.W. London): Leaflet passed by EC 6-4. Letters to EC should have been pointer to further thoughts. Illustration and words would have suggested Party in favour of miners striking now. Coleman says if miners lose, our jobs would be at stake: they are always at stake. This is an emotional appeal of the type made by left wingers. Miners weren't quick to come out when other workers were on strike. Why shouldn't we say a lot of miners have been hoodwinked by Scargill. Miners don't have to have special treatment. The right to work is as phoney as the Labour Party saying the mines belong to the people.

McLellan (Manchester): Upset about totally nitpicking way discussion has been going. Can any member seriously say we are supporting the right to work. We are supporting the miners trying to support their interests. We want to get rid of the right to work.

Moran (Islington): Many of us don't agree with Marx's ideas on how capitalism works. May's view that the strike was doomed to failure. I think miners will win and keep pits open.

Wood (Central): Feeling of supporting working class is very emotional but trade unionism is sectional. You've got to be careful: we tell workers you have to fight to keep your standards.

Carr (Guildford): Discussion important because it's about how we try to communicate with working class - this discussion shows why we have difficulty in communicating. We don't get through if we tell them to go back to work.

G. Slapper (Islington): We have to be skilful and diplomatic. You must forgive the working class for not being Socialist. D of P seeks the speedy termination, so we should rush into print. Mining communities are not nice places but would be much worse if affected by pit closures.

Cook (NPC/Birmingham): Have asked time and again for drafts from Party members. This stresses once again our inability to think as a Party. This is an ambivalent situation. Whichever side you are taking you are going to be wrong. We're not just talking to



...we're talking to other people. Party has to take double-edged attitude with  
...ions, qualifications.  
(S.W. London): National strike is not a picnic and I think a national strike  
...d have been called. Who elected judges, who decided who is to be fined in the  
...rts, etc? Inexcusable events on all sides. I have as much right as any other worker  
...to give my opinion on what others are doing. Strikes can only have limited objective but  
...we have to live in capitalism. Cook put his finger on it - we have to be in this  
paradoxical situation.

L. Cox (EC): Two facts before you - an analysis of Party's whole attitude to trade  
unionism and the miners' strike leaflet. Go back to branches and see if there's anything  
in the criticisms you can agree with. If anything new not expressed before in Party's  
case, make a note and come to Conference next year and say so.

Coleman (Islington): Branch not making criticism of NPC as a Committee. Camden statement  
is historically wrong. We cannot say nothing about the miners - it is part of the class  
struggle. You cannot draw inferences from things which are not there. We are in favour  
of workers being able to go out and work and create their own society. When trade unions  
are weak and employers are able to break unions, jobs are going to be more on the line  
than usual. Trade unions are not queuing up for our advice. How do we relate this to the  
task of putting our case to workers? Our job is to talk to workers about turning the  
class struggle into a political struggle for Socialism.

Item 2(a) Swansea - Moss: These reports have not been discussed by the Party, and it has  
been shoved to the tail-end again. Don't want these discussed negatively. Branch  
circular summed up main parts of production for use reports. Impressed by the 3 levels  
of organisation and self-regulating production. Some implications for further discussion  
of points which we thought somewhat dubious. These provoked a long reply from one  
Committee member, Com. Lawrence. He says we are confused. Statistics can be interpreted.  
Suggestion people in developed countries might have to do with less initially in  
Socialism we don't think can be stated now as part of Party case. We cannot go further  
and say it will take 5 years etc. to raise food production. There are other ways of  
looking at the problem. The reports provide useful ammunition for members to say we  
don't know how the Socialist majority will decide.

Cook (Birmingham): When Committee set up I argued for a discussion group in the Party.  
Now you've got a Committee it is getting us nowhere. It has become a matter of principle  
arguing to win. Should have discussion group issuing discussion papers. Seem to be  
wanting to make statements outside the Party. I don't think positive statements are the  
thing to do. We should ask other workers to come in and discuss with us.

Young (N.W. London): Agree with Swansea circular that we should avoid precise  
predictions like figures of increased food production. World changing at fantastic rate.  
Methods of production change in short time. Protein and other foods can be manufactured.  
It's a nice exercise in science fiction but best we steer clear and stick to the bedrock  
that the minimum requirements of the human race could be satisfied in a Socialist  
society.

P. Lawrence (Production for Use Committee): The Committee laid down a sound method of  
applying basic Party proposal that Socialism is answer to social problems. Nothing to do  
with any future development of capitalism. Socialism is not a future solution to future  
problems. It is solution to existing problems. Swansea project the capture of political  
power with Socialist society not having the slightest idea of what to do. No Socialist  
movement would be so stupid as to let this happen. It will have detailed programmes of  
practical action. Swansea doesn't know whether current food production is enough or not  
enough to satisfy need. Current editorial in World Socialist Journal quotes Marx that  
not enough is produced to satisfy the wants of the great mass decently and humanely.  
Swansea say it is not a problem of production but of distribution. This is a fallacy.  
Statistics on food production are abundant. Socialism will inherit scarcity. To deny  
this is to say capitalism will raise production to fulfil needs. Some workers will have  
to accept cuts in material standards initially. All the letters and correspondence from  
over the world have received this material with enthusiasm and it is being absorbed into  
our propaganda. It is a recapitulation of old Party ideas from the SS in the 30's. We  
cannot escape having to develop these ideas.

Grant (EC): It is a very valuable extension of our work to research into this area. A  
frightening amount produced is spoiled due to poor storage, rodents, etc.

Pinell (Manchester): Food produced but not distributed: I accept there is a problem of  
production, but also of distribution.

C. Slapper (Islington): Endorsed Com. Lawrence's approach to this matter. There is an  
assumption that to reach the production of abundance means Socialism and Socialism means  
abundance. Vital we answer this with regard to social relationship as well as the  
technical means of production.

Moran (Islington): Not task of Party to have any interest in the production for use  
ideas at the moment. The Party is a mechanism with which to take the powers of  
government from the ruling class. Committee's work interesting but only as much as  
reading other pamphlets. Whether one figure or another is wrong is neither here nor  
there to me.

Coleman (Islington): ADM is not really suitable for discussing material of this kind of



importance. It is going to take a lot longer than we have here. It should be circularised around the party and members can look up the figures etc. and educate ourselves for Socialism which is not a future proposition but a present proposition. This is immensely useful work and the criticisms are immensely useful as well.

Easton (S.W. London): Clearly there are problems in both production and distribution. There may be times when there is enough to go round. Capitalist production fluctuates. We have to take some interest and compile statistics of one kind or another. Circulars and papers can help in this process. There should be as much discussion as possible.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): Disagree with Com. Moran's view - I think it has propaganda value. Some people will have more appreciation of political theory and so on whereas others are more concerned or more inspired and convinced by how Socialism will work - what they can do about it and what they can do in a Socialist society. They may be equally convinced but their approach is different.

Moss (Swansea): Swansea admits to open-mindedness. We have to take all sources into consideration. Socialism will know how to organise and how much food is needed. One reason we don't know now is because of statistics now which have bias. At present there is scarcity but capitalism could increase food production if there was a market. The ideas may have been around in the 30's but they are being presented in a more articulate way now and Swansea thinks they are very valuable but we should refrain from making speculations of this kind.

Young (N.W. London): We did want to raise the matter of the immediate abolition of the State: our attitude to the state is fundamental to the Party.

ADJOURNMENT AGREED AT 6.30 p.m.

A.G. ATKINSON  
GENERAL SECRETARY.